



Top 5 Natural Solutions for **CHRONIC PAIN**





LIVING WITH CHRONIC PAIN

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Chronic pain exists as one of the most common health issues across the nation, affecting over 3 million individuals every year. What is it? Chronic pain is defined as any noticeable, persistent pain lasting over 12 weeks without subsiding. It is generally self-diagnosed and can cause severe discomfort for those affected over extended periods of time. Chronic pain is often associated with insomnia, stress, and other emotional and/or psychological side effects such as loss of productivity, focus, or ability to perform daily activities. Many cases of chronic pain are caused by physical injury or medical procedures, or may develop from other existing health-related issues. Chronic pain is decidedly difficult to treat, as each case varies in terms of degree of pain, location, and cause, in addition to being impossible to visibly see and evaluate. Common methods of relief include analgesic pain relievers, such as aspirin and ibuprofen, antidepressants, and other various pain medications that generally mask pain rather than actually reducing it. Recent studies, however, have found a multitude of natural, alternative methods that have proven to be more effective in eliminating or minimizing pain without the damage of synthetic chemicals. Some of the most popular natural remedies include aromatherapy, exercise, deep sleep, dietary supplements, and hemp oil.

AROMATHERAPY

For centuries, essential oils have been used for a variety of different functions from simple relaxation to healing wounds to cooking. Due to the chemical properties of the herbs they are extracted from, essential oils are known for their healing abilities in relieving chronic pain. Oils such as lavender, lemongrass, and bergamot when absorbed into the bloodstream reduce pain and inflammation, as well as any related stress or anxiety. Incorporating aromatherapy into one's daily routine can significantly aid in treating chronic pain in a highly simple and easy manner. Essential oils are most popularly used through inhalation, either with diffusers or misters, or skin absorption such as massaging or rubbing the oil onto the body.

REGULAR EXERCISE

The body requires frequent movement to maintain proper muscle and motor function, as well as adequate oxygen and blood flow. It is therefore crucial to practice regular exercise, as a lack of movement can in fact hinder muscle performance and cause further health issues including chronic pain. Many physicians recommend daily exercise as a treatment for pain, as engaging and stretching muscles can relieve tension and remove strain from various parts of the body. For those affected by arthritis, exercise vastly improves joint health and may considerably relieve any resulting pain. Exercise additionally helps with weight loss and maintenance, reducing further strain on the body caused by excessive weight.

Exercise not only promotes physical health, but mental health as well. Those dealing with depression are often advised to maintain regular exercise as it stimulates the release of endorphins, dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin in the brain. These neurotransmitters are responsible for regulating one's mood and emotions. Often referred to as "happy" chemicals, these brain chemicals trigger feelings of positivity and relieve pain and stress. Regular exercise therefore aids in coping with and reducing pain as well as removing the negative mental side effects that may result from it. Exercise additionally boosts self-esteem, as engaging in beneficial activities and improving one's fitness increases one's sense of well-being.



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ADEQUATE SLEEP

Sleep is detrimental to the body's overall well-being and functioning. Lack of sufficient sleep – 6 to 8 hours has been linked to severe health conditions including obesity, weakened immune systems, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. This is only in addition to the feelings of irritability and fatigue associated with sleep deprivation and the resulting lack of focus and productivity. The body undergoes a state of cleansing and repairing during a state of sleep, and is unable to regulate itself properly if not given adequate time to. Studies link practice healthy sleeping habits with the reduction of chronic pain and the prevention of future conditions that may cause further pain. Although chronic pain may cause insomnia and disruptive sleeping patterns, there are various actions one can take to better their sleep at night. For one, all distractions should be removed before going to sleep to ensure a peaceful, calmed state of mind; this includes electronics and any other materials that may stimulate the brain and prevent it from relaxing. Minimizing or even eliminating naps in addition to increasing physical activity may ensure that one is able to fall asleep and sleep a full 6-8 hours when it comes to the evening.

TURMERIC

Commonly used in cooking, turmeric is a root found in the ginger family well known for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Turmeric contains high levels of curcumin, a compound that can reduce pain by eliminating inflammation and promoting healing. Curcumin is becoming increasingly more popular in treating arthritis and ulcers, as it has proven to substantially reduce pain and is easy to obtain. One can increase their curcumin intake by purchasing supplements or simply incorporating more turmeric into their diet. Turmeric can be added to meals as a spice or added to hot water to be drank as tea.

HEMP OIL

In recent years, hemp has become essentially a super plant for its countless uses and benefits. Part of the cannabis family, hemp is one of the longest used plants throughout history and continues to grow in popularity. In addition to serving as a material for clothing, textiles, and home products, hemp has a wide variety of health benefits from skin improvement to cancer treatment. Adding to the rising consumption of hemp is the use of hemp oil. Contrary to popular belief, hemp oil does not in fact produce a high that recreational marijuana does. Instead, the chemical components of the oil provide a calming relief for stress and tension without dangerous side effects. Hemp seed oil is also known for its anti-inflammatory compounds that minimize pain and combat various diseases such as arthritis, diabetes, and Alzheimer's. Additional benefits of hemp oil are found in treating depression and PTSD, minimizing risk of heart disease, promoting weight loss, improving skin, and aiding children with mild to severe autism.